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New York Chamber of
Commerce

International alliances and
American trade

[New York]

[1916]

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OCT 3 0 1916
G. L. on the President

To be acted upon at the meeting of the Chamber, on November 2, 1916
Confidential until acted upon.

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES AND AMERICAN TRADE:
COOPERATION WITH THE TARIFF COMMISSION
FOR STUDY**

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To the Chamber of Commerce:

The Committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws, having watched developments of vital concern to the commerce of the United States growing out of economic conferences and proposals for the trade alliances among the Central and Entente Allies and between the Kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, believes that there is immediate need for a comprehensive study of the bearing of the policies now being formulated upon the future of American overseas commerce.

The European commerce of this country, of which agricultural and other raw products form so large a part, in the year before the war, amounted to \$2,382,101,597 or fifty-five per cent. of the total foreign trade. In developing and holding this commerce, the United States has enjoyed the benefit of most favored nation agreements. After the war, such arrangements which previously safeguarded the exports of agricultural and other raw products to Great Britain and France, are threatened with abrogation in favor of the products of Russia, Canada, Australia and other allied countries and colonies now bound together so closely by their common sacrifices. Our production of manufactured articles already increasing before the war has been greatly stimulated during the past two years. There seems to be some danger that these exports now abnormally large may be ultimately reduced below the ante-bellum figures because of the preferential arrangements between the members of these groups and between these groups and other countries.

Though there seems ground for reasonable doubt whether it will be possible to put into full operation the plans now contemplated by these Economic and Political Groups, it must be recognized that the best political, economic and diplomatic minds of Europe have for the last two years been intently at work devising trade policies which if put into effect would eliminate much that is inherent in the international tariff structure which has been developed since 1871. In any case, commercial treaties between belligerents and neutrals have been terminated by the war and must ultimately be replaced by new instruments.

Your Committee feels, therefore, that the appointment of the United States Tariff Commission is a matter of peculiar importance at this time. This Chamber has for the past several years favored a permanent non partisan commission of this kind. Its investigations, which

should be immediately initiated, should furnish material of unusual value in framing the new commercial treaties which the United States will shortly be obliged to negotiate. The deliberations of this commission should furthermore give opportunity for discussion of the broad questions of tariff policy viewed alike from the standpoints of securing the national revenue and of safe-guarding our foreign trade.

Though much of the new system of international trade relations now being proposed must remain tentative during the war, your Committee believes that immediate provision for securing flexibility for dealing with each international trade situation as it arises is not only possible but essential for the United States, if our foreign trade is to enjoy equal advantages with that of European nations. Such elasticity should hold an important place in any tariff system, whether its general policy be for national revenue only or for industrial and trade protection, through provisions for negotiation of commercial treaties supplemented by others vesting certain discretionary powers in the Executive. The European nations have long been alive to the advantages of acting under this principle; but while various attempts have been made in our tariff legislation to provide for preferential arrangements, these, except in the case of Cuba, have been unsuccessful. Careful study of the arrangements in operation in Europe as well as those which have been tried here, in the opinion of your Committee, should, therefore, be immediately entered upon by the United States Tariff Commission with the cooperation of commercial organizations for the purpose of devising a definite plan of executive machinery to secure the essential elasticity of tariff operation necessary to meet well-developed powers of this nature possessed by other Governments. Such a plan, your Committee believes, should be incorporated in the tariff system by legislation at the earliest opportunity.

In view of these conditions and opportunities, therefore, the following resolution is presented for the action of the Chamber:

Resolved, That the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York authorizes its Committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws to enter into communication with the leading American commercial organizations here and abroad and with the Congressional committees and Federal departments and commissions concerned with international relations for the purpose of securing by scientific, cooperative study a mutual understanding of the possible effects upon American foreign commerce, including both the import and export trade, of the trade policies which may be developed by the economic alliances. Be it further

Resolved, That the Chamber expresses its belief that the development of the foreign trade of the United States will be best safeguarded and promoted by the adoption of measures which shall assure greater elasticity in the negotiation of tariff arrangements. Be it further

Resolved, That the Chamber authorizes its Committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws to be represented at any hearings which the United States Tariff Commission may hold, for the purpose of presenting its views as to the fiscal and commercial aspects of the

tariff problem, without thereby committing this Chamber to any specific policy or individual view which might be expressed in such capacity.

WILLARD STRAIGHT, *Chairman*

LUDWIG NISSEN

J. LOUIS SCHAEFER

WILLIAM E. PECK

CHARLES A. SCHIEREN

LINCOLN CROMWELL

JOHN V. JEWELL

*Committee on
Foreign
Commerce and
the
Revenue Laws*

NEW YORK, October 17, 1916.

INADEQUATE SALARY FOR UNITED STATES TARIFF COMMISSIONERS

To the Chamber of Commerce:

Whereas, The Act of Congress creating the United States Tariff Commission provides for a salary of only \$7,500 per annum for its members; and,

Whereas, Your Committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws believes that the most competent minds should be devoted to the study of the entire subject; therefore, be it

Resolved, That in the judgment of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York this rate of compensation is considered wholly inadequate to command the services of men of the experience and qualifications required properly to undertake work of such responsibility and of such importance to the business interests of the country.

WILLARD STRAIGHT, *Chairman*

LUDWIG NISSEN

J. LOUIS SCHAEFER

WILLIAM E. PECK

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LINCOLN CROMWELL

JOHN V. JEWELL

*Committee on
Foreign
Commerce and
the
Revenue Laws*

NEW YORK, October 17, 1916.

COOPERATION FOR EXPORT TRADE

To the Chamber of Commerce:

The principle of cooperation in export trade deserves, in the opinion of your Committee on Foreign Commerce and the Revenue Laws, full

support by the United States Government and by American business, in order that American exporters should be free to utilize all the advantages of cooperative effort in competing with the combinations of their competitors which are not only permitted but encouraged by foreign governments. Doubt exists in the minds of American business men as to the legality of cooperative effort in export trade. This doubt amounts to a prohibition of export enterprises in forms attainable only through cooperation. Throughout the world individual American selling effort has been combatted by mobilization of competitors and combinations of buyers which, by playing one set of American producers against another, endeavored to depress the prices of American products until certain natural resources were obtained more cheaply by foreign than by American manufacturers. This inequitable condition promises to be intensified after the war, and the cooperative principle is being carried out in Economic Alliances among the nations which have pooled their resources for the conflict.

Legalization of cooperative effort exclusively for foreign trade, with due safeguards against restraint of domestic commerce, is deemed by your Committee to be necessary to enable the United States to obtain and retain the rightful equity in normal trade, to which its productive resources and its large consumption of the merchandise of other countries entitle it. The principle of cooperation freed from the restrictions of the anti-trust laws, which do not apply to the operations of our competitors overseas, was embodied in the WEBB bill, H. R. 17,350, in the form reported by the Judiciary Committee to the House of Representatives, 64th Congress, First Session. That bill was passed by the House but failed to come to a vote in the Senate, before the Interstate Commerce Committee of which it is now pending. In view of the importance of the principles embodied in this measure to the continued prosperity of the United States and particularly to the labor now occupied with merchandise for which an abnormal demand exists by reason of war, your Committee is moved to recommend the following:

Resolved, That the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York records its belief in the wisdom and necessity of completion of legislation, at the next session of the Sixty-fourth Congress, that shall permit cooperation for export trade, with due safeguards against unreasonable restraint of domestic commerce, as an essential measure of preparation for the extension of the foreign trade of the United States.

WILLARD STRAIGHT, *Chairman*
LUDWIG NISSEN
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JOHN V. JEWELL

*Committee on
Foreign
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NEW YORK, *October 17, 1916.*

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